

critical digest

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The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

Fall Drama Prospects

In Any Language-Cert, 10/8/52. Jule Styne and George Abbett present new comedy by Edmund Belein and Henry Garsen, starring Uta Hagen. Raoul Pene du Bois will design settings and costumes. Tryouts listed for New Haven and Boston.

Summer Tryouts

A Night at Mme. Tussaud's, Edwin Justus Mayer's melodrama starring Miriam Hopkins and Peter Lorre, started its pre-Broadway tour at Norwich, Conn. Rice, Post, thought Lorre should receive star billing because he saves what might be a tedious evening. But while Lorre is onstage, it becomes one of good fun and a merry romp through dislodged heads. Drama editor agrees with Vern, Variety, that script needs much revision before Broadway try... Theatre Guild urged to bring Seagulls Over Sorrento, new play by Hugh Hastings which was a hit in London, to Broadway early in the season by Bene, Variety. Production viewed at Westport, Conn, is a moderately interesting Naval story. Jellyana, new version of Flaherty which features Bobby Clark, Mitzi Gayner and John Beal, debuted at Curran, San Francisco. Edwin Lester production received "A" for effort from Ted, Variety, but critic doubted if show deserved a second Broadway chance. Clark particularly is handicapped by lack of material. While Larsen, Wall Street Journal, thought with diligent cutting, plus more comedy, it was worth a New York try.

Strawhat Visits

Hectic 24 hour a day work schedule of Donald Welin and Harold Schiff, who are finishing their second successful year as operators of Theatre-by-the-Sea at Matunick, RI, detailed to Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun. Actually they run a combination inn, bar, restaurant, night club and theatre. Sunday nights silent movies are shown. Producers never raise their curtain after an intermission until bar is cleared. They hope to operate the theatre as a tryout house for Broadway plays... Kenneth Banghart, NBC radio announcer, commutes week ends to his Olney, Md, theatre, Rice, Post, reports. Company and producer's courageous action in continuing musical by group's late manager, Camin' Thru the Rye by Warren P. Munsell, Jr. praised by Rice. Recent production of J.B. Priestley's Dangerous Corner, starring Faye Emerson highly rated by drama editor who applauded star for not riding on her reputation.

New Theatre Bill Debated

Four pre editorials, one con editorial and a pair of buck passing open letters added to score of Howard Cullman's attempt to get a new theatre building law passed in NYC. Herald Tribune, Journal American and WT&S editorials congratulated Bernard Gimbel president of New York Convention and Visitors' Bureau, support of new theatre building code. All hoped City Council would be beated into action. Post editorial wondered if Broadway must threaten to move to Short Hills, NJ, before Council acts. Foreman, Compass, panned idea of bars in theatre, suggesting theatre fans go to plays to be educated. City Councilman Hugh Quinn blamed League of NY Theatre head James Reilly for failing to discuss new bills, while Reilly said he never received the proper technical advice. Reilly hoped campaign would be resumed at time when building controls were lifted. Chapman, News, fears we are stuck with the present theatres for several years to come.

' Cumulative NYC Ratings '

D - Daily W - Weekly M - Monthly B - Broadcast

DT - NY Times	DJC - Journal of Commerce	WCM - Chr. Science Monitor
DE - NY Herald Tribune	DWJ - Wall Street Journal	WC - Commonweal
DN - NY News	DWW - Women's Wear	WCU - Cue
DM - NY Mirror	WB - Billboard	WN - Nation
DC - NY Compass	WV - Variety	WNR - New Republic
DP - NY Post	WCD - Critical Digest	WNS - Newsweek
DJ - NY Journal American	WGN - George Jean Nathan	WNY - New Yorker
DW - NY World Tele-Sun	WWM - Ward Morehouse	WSR - Saturday Review
DB - Brooklyn Eagle	BC - WCBS Bill Leonard	WT - Time
DL - L.I.Press	BL - New Leader-WEVD	MP - Park East

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them not if they think they will be hits. "Se-se" means the critic did not state directly if he recommends the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

THE FOURPOSTER-10/24/51	PROS: 19	CON: DH DP WGM WWM BL WC WNY
		NONE: DWJ WN WNR WSR
GUYS AND DOLLS-11/24/50	PROS: 29	CON: WN
THE KING AND I-3/29/51	PROS: 29	CON: WN
THE MALE ANIMAL-4/30/52	PROS: 27	NONE: WGN MP WNR
THE MOON IS BLUE-3/8/51	PROS: 26	CON: WCD WGN NONE: WN MP
MRS. McTHING-2/20/52	PROS: 20	CON: DM DJ BC BL WNR WT WGN NONE: WNR MP
PAL JOEY-1/3/52	PROS: 25	CON: BL NONE: WNR
NEW FACES OF 1952-5/16/52	PROS: 25	CON: DP WT WGN NONE: WN WNR
A NIGHT IN VENICE-6/26/52	PROS: 20	CON: DC WSR NONE: WGN WNR BC WT MP
POINT OF NO RETURN-12/13/51	PROS: 25	CON: DW BL WN WNR WT
SOUTH PACIFIC-4/7/49	PROS: 29	CON: WT
TOP BANANA-11/1/51	PROS: 23	CON: DP DJ BL NONE: WCM WN WNR WSR
WISH YOU WERE HERE-6/25/52	PROS: DN DC DB DL DJC WV BL	
	CON: DT DH DM DP DJ DW DWJ WB WWM WC WCU WNS WNY WSR WT	
	NONE: DWW WCD WGN BC WCM WN WNR MP	

' Vaudeville '

Theatre on Ice: Brigadeen will be presented in a condensed version in September 11 "Ice Capades of 1953" at Madison Square Garden...Robin Heed, current ice show hit in London, may be presented here by Diana Walker and Frank Senna...Chapman, News, sees enormous possibilities if these shows on ice skates prove successful. As a starter he imagines Ethan Frome dramatic sleigh ride with real hill, real tree and real deaths.

Fellow the Girls tableid production recently shown at Holiday, will tour night club circuit, and may be produced as a film by Harry Delmar and Frank Sennes...RKO Theatre president Sel Schwartz in Europe booking acts for Palace...Martin & Lewis demanding 70 percent of gross for NY vaudeville appearance, Wilson, Pest, repeats...Americans due to appear at London Palladium include Frankie Lane August 18, Bob Hope September 1 and Les Paul and Mary Ford September 15.

Radio City Music Hall stage show, playing with "Ivanhoe" film rated as one of most promising in long time by Smith, Billboard...Trade reviewer enjoyed Roger King Mezian, Mescelyn Larkin and Robert Calser, Chick Chester, Bob Williams. But he thought final Rockette number resulted in discord.

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' Green Room Department '
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CRITICAL THOUGHTS...If ANTA, in spite of its good purposes, can't be made to work, it should give its charter back to Congress, suggests Chapman, News...Two troubles with modern theatre, notes George Jean Nathan, are fancy, uncomfortable modern theatre designers' notions and the dearth of real ham acting...Los Angeles, in a repulsive way for such a large city, succeeds in making theatre unimportant, reports Watts, Pest.

LEARNING TO ACT...Though there is a great value in studying in a dramatic school, the training system compares unfavorably with other professions, Ralph Richardson told London's Royal Society of Arts, "Amateur Stage" reports. Unfortunately it is not the custom of the most prominent players to go to teach, nor are students encouraged to attend rehearsals of professional shows. Repertory is the perfect training, with the best results achieved if the young actor can play one role many times during his first year.

COLUMN TIPS...Theatre people in Chicago wondering if rush of enthusiasm and money would not bring some of the best first run plays to the Windy City instead of Broadway, hears Kilgallen...An investor in a hit musical will sue the producer for "mismanagement," whispers Walker.

MAIL BOX...Slight chance of Babes in Toyland revival for next Christmas, Morehouse, WT&S informs reader...Theatre air conditioning systems "stink" a stationary engineer informs Chapman, News. Perfume must be used to kill ill effects of breathing recirculated air...Only publicity stunts that seem to work are heaves, Samuel Steinman, press agent of Paper Mill Playhouse, NY, writes Burr, Playbill.

THEATRE FREEDOM...Coming season will prove whether the stage is free forum or not, comments Watts, Pest. Because theatre isn't popular, the publicity-seeking inquisitors haven't been too much concerned about it. Critic doubts if theatre will be as timorous as TV and movies in the face of a smear investigation.

INTERVIEW HI LITES...One hundred investors in Children of Darkness will get same treatment as full-fledged angels from producers Howard Gettfried and Harold Sebelman, Rice, Pest, learned. They hope to bring more people into contact with the theatre by their investment...Sidney Kingsley working on a new play due in December on a subject he is sure the Communists won't like, he told Morehouse, WT&S.

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' Theatre News Roundup '
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Top Banana reopens September 1st...Holly Harris subs for Vivienne Segal, Pal Jeey, during latter's two week vacation...Kerr, Herald Tribune, spoke at American Theatre Wing's "Symposium of the Current Theatre"..."International Theatre" first issue now due first week of September...Diana Herbert sponsoring exhibit of paintings, drawings, sculpture by theatre people at "Shew Shep"...Regent Park Players of England will present short season of Shakespeare next fall in US...Company of Bali dancers and musicians will present limited engagement at Fulton starting September 16...St.John Terrell's "Mobile Music Circus" debuts at Dallas Fair October 4th with Shew Beat...Marge Jones site hunting in San Francisco for 1953 Theatre in Round project...Thornton Wilder read passages from his Our Town at Peterborough, NH, in ceremony honoring Mrs. Edward MacDowell. Theodora Irvine, founder and head of Irvine Studio of the Theatre, died...George Bernard Shaw's home, which he left to the British Government as a show place, has failed to attract sufficient tourists to pay for its upkeep...Rice, Pest, to vacation in Europe during September...Belton, Morning Telegraph, injured in home accident...Gertrude Lawrence, The King and I, missed several days performance due to poison ivy injections, Constance Carpenter subbing...South Pacific passes \$3 million profit mark...Robert Whitehead resigned as managing director of ANTA Play Series, but ANTA may produce The Merchant of Venice, starring Clarence Derwent.

 ' Meet the Producer - William de Lys '

Any theatre producer who owns his own theatre can institute a theatre club program or a winter stock company at any time, William de Lys told "Critical Digest" in an exclusive interview. The young producer, who launches his unique Theatre de Lys September 29th with Frankie and Johnny, can find no explanation except laziness for the reason producers haven't carried out such programs to keep their theatre occupied throughout the year.

De Lys, who has been planning his own theatre for years, will have spent close to \$90,000 on the former Hudson Theatre on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village before opening night. Though his price schedule for his first ten play series isn't much lower than Broadway prices, the producer believes his offerings will attract subscribers because of the special services aimed at comfortable playgoing. Free checking of hats and coats, free intermission refreshments, comfortable seats, convenient auto parking are only a few of the advantages listed.

Because tickets are sold only to subscribers, de Lys can refuse admission to anyone he doesn't want in his theatre. Already he has turned down for membership a person who complained that his first year schedule didn't include any Shakespeare or Shaw. The producer doubts if the person with such a pre-conceived notion of what he likes would enjoy his plays. The reason his schedule didn't include these classics is because he feels that as a starting group, he couldn't give any more than an adequate presentation of such plays. At some later date when his theatre has developed, he then hopes to present a fine production of some of the classics. At present he believes he can produce plays of a wider variety than the typical Broadway producer can.

Though he realizes the reason Greenwich Village plays have thrived within the past year is because of the low caliber of Broadway productions, de Lys didn't plan to work from the Village when he started. He had merely considered an option on the dilapidated movie house, which had been built in 1913. But the news of the option brought more than 50 queries. As a result he believes he can stimulate the interest expressed. Promotion and advertising have already brought memberships from throughout the country and around the world.

Following his own advice, de Lys will keep his theatre very busy. Active series in jazz, opera, concert and lecture fields will get under way in October. An ambitious children's theatre program also will be instituted. More than 1500 theatre people will be employed during the year. Future plans call for traveling "Portable Theatre" productions and a monthly stage pictorial of pocket size called "Drama Digest."

 ' Legit Stuff '

Guys and Dolls joins shows starting 7:00 P.M. Monday curtain September 8th...
 League of NY Theatres and Actors Equity contract talks stalled over album recording privileges...Stagehands Union contract talks postponed until December...Murray Hamilton subs for Barry Nelson, The Moon Is Blue...Theatre Guild reading Oklahoma and Jane. . .

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